



**To: The Honorable Beth Bye, Senate Chair
The Honorable Roberta Willis, House Chair
The Honorable Toni Boucher, Senate Ranking
The Honorable Timothy LeGeyt, House Ranking
Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee**

From: Marc S. Herzog, Chancellor

Re: Higher Education and Employment Advancement Public Hearing

H.B. 6257, AN ACT CONCERNING A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.

Date: March 3, 2011

The Board of Trustees for Connecticut's Community Colleges has consistently advocated for the development of a strategic plan for higher education in Connecticut over many years, most recently in discussions connected to the study on Higher Education Governance conducted by the Program Review and Investigations Committee for its December 2010 report. Like numerous educational leaders and lawmakers, the Board views a strategic plan as essential to ensuring the relevance of higher education to the needs of the State and its citizens and to maximizing accountability and the return on the State's investment of resources in higher education.

HB 6257 calls for the Board of Governors, after consultation with the Higher Education Coordinating Council, a statutorily established advisory group, that includes among its members the Chancellor of the Connecticut Community College System and the chair of the Board of Trustees of Community Colleges, to:

- Examine demographics and workforce trends;
- Address degree attainment, workforce preparation and the state's achievement gap;
- Include bench marks for achieving the plans goals;
- Examine funding policies including appropriation, tuition and financial aid and ways to maximize funding through federal and private grants;
- Expand each constituent unit's role in advancing economic growth, consistent with the unit's mission;
- Submit a biennial report.

While these same responsibilities are currently assigned to the Board of Governors for Higher Education in current statutes, the proposed legislation adds to the statutory requirements the important goals of:

- promoting economic development
- ensuring affordability and efficient use of resources
- improving teaching and learning by joining with elementary and secondary schools.

The Board of Trustees of Community Colleges strongly endorses the addition of these new goals and recommends the development of a strategic plan for Connecticut higher education without delay. The Board further recommends that the strategic planning effort include consideration of the development of a Public Agenda for Higher Education as described in the recent report on Higher Education Governance Structure accepted by the Program Review and Investigations Committee in Dec. 2010.

This report, which includes an extensive review of various models of governance for public higher education throughout the country, their history, classifications and effectiveness, recommends the creation

of a **comprehensive strategic plan** reinforcing the goals of HB 6257 by calling for a public agenda for higher education that would include:

- “A public needs report ... that recognizes and reinforces differences in constituent unit missions and capacities;
- A higher education policy audit report matched to the needs analysis;
- A public agenda priorities report, specific strategies, and measurable objectives;
- A finance report on current financing policies, practices, and accountability.”

*Higher Education Governance Structure, December 2010
Program Review and Investigations Committee Report*

The concluding recommendation of the study is to create “a statement of ... principles about the role that higher education plays in the state - a public agenda - to assess needs, create strategies to meet those needs, monitor and incentivize them.” This is offered by the report “as the best way to improve the state’s system ... and to not dampen the individual success that Connecticut’s higher education institutions have achieved, [and] to augment them by addressing recognized state needs.”

The Board of Trustees endorses the proposed strategic plan for higher education as a highly practical means for fostering the success of institutions and Connecticut’s higher education enterprise overall. More importantly, it promises to enhance higher education’s capacity to meet the needs of Connecticut students and the needs of the State itself which relies on an educated and skilled workforce to ensure economic prosperity.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me or our legislative liaison Meghan Fanning mfanning@commnet.edu or 860-244-7631.